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SUBJECT: UAE PRESIDENT'S PRESS REMARKS ON REGIONAL ISSUES

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11. Summary: In a rare press interview (this time with Qatar's Al-Watan newspaper) in advance of the Doha summit, UAE president Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan commented on the continuing strength of relations with the U.S. as Washington changes leadership, expressing optimism in the Obama Administration's approach to key Middle East issues. He called for calm dialogue with Iran and reiterated the desire for a territorial dispute to be settled by the ICJ. He hoped for Kuwaitis to unite politically, in the best interests of the country, and put the "fair price per barrel" of oil at US \$70 - \$75. Citing improvement within Iraq, Sheikh Khalifa also emphasized progress in Baghdad's regional integration. He addressed Israeli-Palestinian issues and Sudan (repeated reftel). The following draws from the UAEG's official news agency translation of the President's remarks. End summary.U.S. RELATIONS

12. "Our relations with the United States are old and are governed by fixed political realities which do not change as a result of succeeding US administrations. The first of these facts is that the United States is a great power which shoulders huge responsibilities for international peace, security and stability. Therefore, relations with the United States are a necessity for any other country, regardless of any differences and different perspectives. Secondly, there is the accumulated legacy of relations between our two countries that has allowed us to make our point of view heard on regional and international issues as well as to build cooperation in many areas benefiting the interests of the two countries and strengthening the ties of friendship and reciprocal respect. Within this framework of political realities, we hope to continue working with the new US administration under President Barack Obama. We feel optimistic about his new approach towards many regional and international issues, and the situation in the Middle East and Iraq in particular."

13. "We hope that the recent activity by the US, represented by the frequent visits by US officials to the region, would lead to serious action on the Arab-Israeli conflict to ensure the establishment of peace and security in the region as well as to allow citizens of the region's countries to devote their full attention to the process of construction and development."

IRAN

14. Sheikh Khalifa said the recent U.S. presidential message to Iran could be a positive prelude to a serious dialogue. He called for "dialogue to preserve stability, because we are against tension" to safeguard Gulf security; better U.S.-Iran relations can help the region avoid crises. He also raised the three UAE islands occupied by Iran, stating that the UAE would accept any ruling made by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and said Syrian President al-Asad's mediation with Iran was welcome. The "Iranian nuclear program is a worry for us, particularly if it is not peaceful," he was quoted as saying.

POSSIBLE U.S.-IRAN MILITARY CONFRONTATION

15. "As a matter of principle, we do not condone the use of force in solving international disputes no matter how far away the location of

this dispute may be. How much more so, when it is next door! We always stress the need to listen to the sense of reason in resolving differences on Iran's nuclear program, which should be by peaceful means. We still hope these efforts will succeed. We also hope that all parties will exercise self-restraint and meet the demands of the international community on this issue."

KUWAIT'S EXPERIENCE WITH DEMOCRACY

¶6. "We wish all the best to the leadership, government and people of our sisterly country, Kuwait. We hope that the new Kuwaiti cabinet will be formed and a new Parliament will be elected. We also hope that both bodies will engage in joint action to reunite, in the best interest of Kuwait and for the prosperity and the welfare of the Kuwaiti people.

OIL PRICES AND THE ECONOMY

¶7. Low world oil prices affect all countries, as does the global financial crisis -- including the UAE, which plays "pivotal regional and international financial and economic roles." "We believe that oil prices went up to inconceivable levels, but now are so low that some countries are not able to develop their oil fields because of the decrease of revenues. We believe the low price of oil hurts the interests of everybody. A fair price for oil, in our view, should be anywhere between US \$70 to \$75."

IRAQ'S RETURN TO NORMALCY

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¶8. "Indications and reports reaching us show that there is significant improvement in this regard. There is a sharp fall in the number of security incidents and number of deaths. On the other hand, there is a significant improvement in the general climate in the country which was shown by the relatively successful provincial elections recently held in that country. As for an open policy towards Iraq by countries in the region, it is something that is actually happening. There have been a number of visits to Iraq by official delegations from Gulf and other Arab countries, and, moreover, a number of these countries have reopened their diplomatic missions in Iraq."

FOLLOWING TOPICS REPEATED FROM REFTEL

¶9. ISRAEL/PALESTINIAN ISSUE: Sheikh Khalifa called on the US, European countries and others to put pressure on Israel to accept a just solution to the Palestinian problem in line with the Arab Peace Initiative. "We hope that the United States and European countries would maintain pressure on Israel to force it to approve a just and peaceful solution to the Palestinian cause. This is in harmony with the Arab Peace Initiative which entails the creation of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, in return for a recognition of Israel. Extremists in Israel might well opt for the peaceful solution at any time, if they seriously consider a solution that would serve peace and stability in the whole region."

¶10. PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION AND NATIONAL UNITY: "We have always expressed our belief in the importance of uniting ranks and positions, not only within each Arab country, but also on the Pan-Arab level. Therefore, it goes without saying that the United Arab Emirates is sparing no efforts, both declared or undeclared, to unite the ranks of the Palestinians and to support, in this regard, all the good offices of Arab countries, in particular our big sister country, Egypt, which has hosted the dialogue among Palestinian factions. We call on our brother Palestinians to respond to those efforts and good offices and to prioritize the higher national interests over factional or partisan interests. We hope those efforts would result in building a solid Palestinian position that can meet the requirements of the coming stage, whether relevant to the peace process or to the process of reconstruction."

¶11. SUDAN: "We expressed our concern over the impact of the decision taken by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the stability of Sudan and the current political dialogue as well as on the efforts being made to activate the political process in Darfur aimed at implementing the peace agreement. At the same time, however, we expressed our astonishment at the fact that the same court did not pay attention to the crimes of genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza."

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